



Ministry of Housing,
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Tony McArdle
Lead Commissioner for Northamptonshire
1 Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton NN1 1ED

13 November 2018

Dear Tony,

Thank you for your letter of 2 November about children's services in Northamptonshire, following the focussed visit by Ofsted on 17 and 18 October.

Your letter paints a concerning picture about the current performance of children's services in Northamptonshire. You make a strong case for adding additional expertise and capacity on children's services to the Commissioner team to support the council to address the current service issues quickly and to review longer-term arrangements in light of the proposals to re-organise the council at large. Ofsted's recent focussed visit found that arrangements for managing contacts and referrals and thresholds for children in need of help and protection have significantly deteriorated since inspection in 2016 and issued the authority two areas for priority action. It is important that these actions are quickly addressed and that sustainable improvements are made.

That is why we have today written to Northamptonshire County Council setting out that we are minded to appoint a Children's Services Commissioner, who will provide additional capacity and capability around children's services within the existing governance of the wider Government intervention. The Council will have a week to make representations on a draft statutory Direction appointing the Commissioner. Having considered any representations made, we will make a final decision.

We would expect a Children's Services Commissioner to work with you and the Council to provide immediate support to stabilise and improve Northamptonshire's children's services, working with Northamptonshire's Partner in Practice, Lincolnshire County Council. The Children's Services Commissioner would also support you and the Councils in making decisions about the future of Northamptonshire's services should local government be reorganised in Northamptonshire. The Children's Services Commissioner would be appointed on a non-executive basis – he would have a remit to issue any necessary instructions to the authority to secure adequate performance in children's services. However, the operational and strategic accountability for the delivery of these services would remain with Northamptonshire County Council until such time as a plan for future delivery has been agreed.

Our preferred candidate for this role is Malcolm Newsam CBE. As you will know, Malcolm is an experienced director of children's services and former Government Commissioner in Rotherham and Sandwell. He brings skills and experience around alternative delivery models for children's social care, and has worked with a team of Commissioners as part of the Government's intervention in Rotherham, where services are now judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted.

We hope you will welcome this appointment. Thank you for all you are doing to support the delivery of services in Northamptonshire, and please do not hesitate to write again if would be helpful to do so. We are making copies of our correspondence available on gov.uk.



Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State for Housing,
Communities and Local Government



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education